System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26
Meeting Notes
November 8, 2001

Greetings and Introductions.

The November 8 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and facilitated by Richard Forester. The agenda and a list of attendees for the November 8 meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

1. September SCT Notes.

Hevlin distributed the draft September 27 SCT meeting notes, and asked that any comments be provided to him at the December SCT meeting. No comments were provided on the August SCT minutes at today's meeting.

2. Briefing on the McNary Turbine Modernization Program

Hevlin said this topic was discussed two weeks ago at FFDRWG; he then introduced Kevin Crum of the Corps, the project manager for the McNary turbine modernization program. Crum went through a series of overheads (available as Enclosure C), touching on the following topics:

- The McNary Upgrade Study Team
- Overview of McNary powerhouse modernization
- Timeline for McNary powerhouse modernization (start biological tests on prototype unit in April 2006)
- The general scope of the McNary powerhouse modernization program

Please refer to Enclosure C for details of Crum's presentation.

Crum noted that the McNary powerhouse modernization program is BPA-funded, and is not a part of the CRFM program. The Corps intends to utilize a two-phase contractual approach, with proposals evaluated on best value (as opposed to lowest price). Phase I of the program will be the selection and award of contracts to multiple (up to four) test contractors; Phase II will consist of competition between the selected contractors and evaluation of their designs. Evaluation and selection will be based on model performance testing at independent labs and tests conducted at WES; factors for selection will include fish performance, hydraulic performance and price, Crum said.

If a viable design is identified, Crum continued, the next step will be to build a full-scale prototype for installation and testing at McNary. We will then conduct performance and biological testing at the project, he said. If the prototype proves viable, the Corps will exercise its option to replace up to 13 existing turbines at McNary with new turbines once proper environmental compliance and coordination has been conducted, said Crum.

What criteria will you use to determine whether or not a prototype is successful? Ron Boyce asked. That's yet to be determined, Crum replied; however, I believe that topic is being discussed within the Turbine Survival Program. In response to a question, Steve Rainey noted that a meeting to discuss the McNary powerhouse modernization program will be held on November 20 in Portland; any interested SCT members are invited to attend.

Boyce noted that there are concerns about fish survival through the higher turbine flows and reduced spill volumes envisioned under the McNary powerhouse upgrade program; he asked where that issue is being discussed. So far, we've been discussing it internally at NMFS, Hevlin replied – our best guess is that survival is pretty good through McNary under the current configuration there, and obviously any potential negative survival impact is a concern -- there would need to be a quantifiable benefit for fish if the powerhouse upgrade is to go forward. Boyce suggested that this is a topic that would benefit from further FPAC discussion; there was general SCT agreement that this would be useful. In addition, said Mike Mason, the Corps will have to go through the appropriate NEPA process, so there will be ample opportunity to discuss this issue.

It was agreed to schedule a further update on the McNary powerhouse modernization program at a future SCT meeting, probably about six months from now.

3. Lower Granite Removable Spillway Weir (RSW) Update.

Crum also led this presentation, going through another series of overheads, titled "Removable Spillway Weir – Lower Granite Lock and Dam" (available as Enclosure D). Crum provided a visual diagram of the RSW design, then moved on to the following status report:

- The RSW is now fixed to the dam
- Two hydraulic tests have been conducted to date, one on September 11 and the other on

October 5. Both tests were relatively successful, despite problems opening the tainer gate on both test days.

- The first biological (balloon tag) test is being conducted this week.
- Further biological testing in the spring of 2002 are being coordinated through FFDRWG
- RSW "deployment" tests are scheduled for June 2002.

Crum also provided a schedule laying out upcoming RSW testing.

Crum spent a few minutes going through these overheads; please refer to this document for details of his presentation. In response to a question from Hevlin, Crum said he has heard no preliminary results from the ongoing balloon tag test.

Tim Wick joined the meeting at this point; in response to a question from Rainey, he said the reports he has seen to date indicated only one non-recovered fish to date in the balloon tag test; there was also one fish with some head trauma during yesterday's test, but as far as I know, everything else looked clean, Wick said. He cautioned, however, that this is extremely preliminary information. Wick added that this round of testing ends tomorrow; he said more detailed preliminary information from the test could be available as soon as next week. In response to another question, Crum said the construction cost of the RSW prototype has now increased to $11.6 million, plus $800,000 for design. He added that the RSW homepage is www.nww.usace.army.mil/rsw.

4. FY'02 CRFM Program Update.

John Kranda distributed a revised FY'02 CRFM spreadsheet (Enc. E). He noted that the Conference Committee has spoken; the FY'02 CRFM program has been set at $81 million. Savings and slippage will be large again this year, he said; it is expected that only $68-$69 million will be available for the CRFM program until savings and slippage can be restored. The Corps is still planning to move out on the entire $81 million worth of projects, anticipating that savings and slippage will be fully restored in FY'02 as it was in FY'01.

Kranda spent a few minutes going through the revised spreadsheet, noting that the cost estimates for a number of items have changed. He noted that, for the first time, the spreadsheet shows estimated costs out to FY'10; it also includes cumulative cost estimates through FY'06.

The group spent a few minutes discussing this information; ultimately, Kranda noted that the revised spreadsheet is mainly for the SCT's information; there are no decisions to be made today. There was general agreement that, at the December SCT meeting, it will probably be time to begin discussing the FY'03 CRFM program. The cumulative estimated cost of the currently-shown FY'03 CRFM program is about $125 million, which means some heavy cost-cutting and prioritization work if the $80-$85 million trend in Congressional appropriations holds true, Kranda observed.

5. Status of Bonneville Decision Document.

The draft Bonneville decision document is now out for review, Kranda said; the Corps has received some comments and we are working to incorporate them. The Corps has presented the decision document to the ISRP; their report on the document is expected to be available in January. In response to a question, Kranda said the main magnet for comment so far is the Corps' recommended alternative, as well as the Corps' recommendation that the Bonneville surface collection program be discontinued. It was agreed that the SCT will revisit this topic at its December meeting, and that the SCT will receive a further update at its February meeting, once the ISRP's report is available.

6. Funding Status for Chief Joseph Flow Deflectors.

Kranda noted that there is still no funding for the Chief Joseph flow deflectors in the FY'02 CRFM budget. Hevlin said it is still his hope that enough funding can be found to finish the design work, at least, so that some progress can continue to be made on the deflector project. Kranda said he will continue to investigate that possibility, and will provide a further report as more information becomes available.

7. Status and Review of Annual Implementation Plan.

Ken Barnhart noted that an early version of the AIP was released this week; we're continuing to make some small changes, he said. Barnhart noted that the tables are the guts of the AIP, and recommended that reviewers focus their attention on those sections. Barnhart said the draft AIP will be made available on the www.salmonrecovery.gov homepage by next week; he added that he will provide further updates to the SCT on an as-needed basis.

When do we anticipate a findings letter from NMFS on the annual and five-year implementation plans? Mason asked. They want to get all four major pieces in the letter, he said – the AIP, the five-year implementation plan, the 2001 progress report and the "lessons learned" document – before they provide a findings letter, Barnhart replied.

8. FFDRWG Update.

Rebecca Kalamasz reported on items discussed at the most recent Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting:

- the McNary temperature program
- McNary Cylindrical dewatering
- Flow deflector construction at Little Goose, McNary, Lower Monumental
- McNary outfall location predation study
- Lower Granite adult transition pool update
- Problems with predation monitoring at the Little Goose trash boom (more discussion needed here)
- Construction update (McNary PIT-tag diversion system, McNary adult PIT-tag detector, Ice Harbor PIT-tag detector, AWS at the Snake River projects)
- Fish ladder temperature control report

- Adult collection channel fallback at McNary and Ice Harbor

Kalamascz noted that the annual FFDRWG research review is scheduled at Whitman College in Walla Walla next week.

9. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, December 20 beginning at 9 a.m. at NMFS' Portland offices. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA writer-editor pool.